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"Peace and Security", National Press Club

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Instructions:
Prepare one form for insertion at the beginning of each record series.
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Record Type*: Speeches & Remarks

MONTH/YEAR of Records*: March-1997
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(1) Subject*: Foreign Policy
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(2) Subject* Peace and Security

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* "required information"
Good morning, everyone. Thank you all for coming. And special thanks to Peter Hickman and the National Press Club.

We meet at an historic time. With the passing of Deng Xiaoping, China is adjusting to a new leader for the fourth time this century. This Saturday, Vice President Gore begins the first China trip of an American President or Vice President since 1989. A new era in relations with China is opening, just as surely as one began ninety-seven years ago today, on March 20, 1900, when Secretary of State John Hay announced the Open Door Policy and helped end colonial expansion in Asia.

In this new era, our China policy agenda is broader and more important than ever before. You know that as members of the press. One morning you're writing on Most Favored Nation status and human rights. The next Taiwan. Hong Kong. Missile sales. The World Trade Organization. Campaign contributions. Global warming. Trade opportunities. Trade barriers. Korea. So many issues that it is almost baffling.

And rather than plunge in and take them all one after the other, I want to step back. Begin not by thinking about China policy, but about strategy. What is it that we want to achieve in foreign affairs? And I think there are three things. First, keep the peace. Second, make ourselves and the world more prosperous. And third, raise the quality of life.

So this morning I will begin a series of four speeches which, I hope, will lay out a China strategy that will serve us in each of these strategic goals. Today I will focus on peace and security. Next month I will move to trade and economics; then the environmental agenda; and finally MFN status and human rights.

OUR POSITION TODAY

I begin with peace and security simply because if we are not at peace, other issues tend to fade into the background.

And as we think about a China policy that will keep us peaceful and secure, we should start with our position today and our goals for the future. And for an informed, concise summary of where we stand, let me quote General Patrick Hughes, a fellow...
Montanan who heads the Defense Intelligence Agency. Last month he told the Senate Intelligence Committee:

"From a national security standpoint, the threats facing the United States have diminished in order of magnitude, and we are unlikely to face a global military challenger on the scale of the former Soviet Union for at least the next two decades. The world is spending in real terms some 30-40% less on defense than it did during the height of the Cold War, the "rogue" states are isolated, and at least one -- North Korea -- is probably terminal."

So we're pretty lucky. For the first time since the 1930s, we have no global military challenger. Our enemies are weak and isolated. And our goal is clear. Rather than react to a crisis, we need to plan ahead. In essence, to make sure that whoever succeeds General Hughes in twenty years can say the same thing.

THE CHALLENGES AHEAD

Now we can decide on the road we must take to reach that goal.

In Europe, strengthen our ties with Russia and satisfy the aspiration of newly democratic states for security and integration into the western world.

In Latin America, reduce the dependence of local economies on narcotics, and prevent a return to wars and rebellions.

In the Middle East, win peace agreements that reconcile Israel with moderate Arab states while blocking the emergence of fundamentalist or fascist states with nuclear weapons.

As complex as these issues are, preserving peace in Asia will be even more difficult. In Asia, seven of the world's nine largest armies and five of its seven nuclear powers coexist. Rapid economic growth and growing military spending coincide with unresolved historic and territorial conflicts.

For the past twenty years, American policy used three things to prevent these tensions from erupting into conflict. First, the presence of 100,000 American soldiers and 200 Navy ships in the Pacific. Second, strong alliances with Japan, South Korea, Southeast Asia, Australia and New Zealand. And third, a cooperative if often difficult relationship with China.

THE BASIC QUESTION

A policy based on these three pillars would serve us just as well in the next twenty years. If we maintain our economic strength and technological leadership, we
can support a forward military presence indefinitely. If we avoid self-inflicted diplomatic wounds, we can preserve our alliances. But since the end of the Cold War and Tiananmen Square, our relationship with China has been a question mark.

In Congress, in the press, in academia, we have debated every aspect of our relationship with China. These debates are emotional and intense. They divide both parties; affect our most important national interests; touch on our most deeply held values.

At times they focus on human rights; at times trade; at times security. But the basic question is always the same. That is, whether we can have a beneficial relationship with China despite occasional differences; or whether, because of domestic ideology or great-power aspirations, China is a fundamentally hostile power.

SEEKING TRUTH FROM FACTS

Our security strategy in China must flow from the answer to this question. And the way to find the answer, to quote Deng Xiaoping himself, is to "seek truth from facts." So let's look at the facts.

China is a country of 1.2 billion people. It has a Leninist government which fears and suppresses political dissent, but allows progressively more personal freedom and open debate over economic policies. Its economy is already the world's second, third or fourth largest depending on how you measure it, and grows about 10% a year. It has a three-million man army, nuclear weapons and ICBMs; spent perhaps $50 billion on the military last year and will spend about 12% more this year.

Equally important, although subjective, is China's view of itself and its role in the world. It is conscious of a glorious past, in which foreigners came to China to learn or pay tribute. It developed the world's first professional civil service almost thirteen hundred years ago. Its artistic and philosophical culture had no better. And it had the world's most advanced science and technology -- many Chinese inventions, from clockwork to paper to explosives, remain inescapable parts of our daily lives today. It still calls itself Zhong Guo, meaning "the central country."

But China is equally conscious of more recent weakness, poverty and military setbacks. Except for the Japanese invasion in the 1930s, the worst of these disasters -- from the Taiping Rebellion in the 1860s to the Great Leap Forward and Cultural Revolution -- resulted from domestic Chinese problems. But, like most of us, the Chinese tend to blame other people for their troubles. To quote Foreign Minister Qian:

"Looking at history, we find the Chinese people have an agonizing past as victims of imperialist aggression, bullying and dismemberment... We have not threatened anyone, nor have we claimed a single inch of land of other countries... It is China's sovereignty and integrity that have been constantly
under threat and violation from the outside."

CHINA'S APPROACH TO THE WORLD TODAY

That is the country with which we will live for years to come. Large and powerful; authoritarian; proud of its past; defensive and often tempted to attribute the worst motives to foreigners.

In 1994

How does China's approach to the outside world reflect this?

At times in alarming ways. We all see reports of sales of missiles and nuclear technology. Ominous positions on the South China Sea. Rising military spending, coupled with unwillingness to publish clear, accurate information about the defense budget. A troubling relationship with Iran. Missiles fired in the Taiwan Strait during Taiwan's Presidential elections last year. A rhetorical style that seems hysterical at times. If press reports are correct, even attempts to give money to American political campaigns.

These are serious problems. But we must remember that we have seen worse. In the 1950s and 1960s, China opposed all US foreign policy goals. May well have encouraged North Korea to attack the south, and ultimately intervened in the war itself. Fired artillery not only near, but at Quemoy and Matsu. Fought border wars with India and the Soviet Union. Attempted to subvert nations friendly to us by sponsoring revolutionary movements in Africa, Thailand, Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines.

Today is very different. If we set aside issues in which China has a territorial interest, the record is good. In Korea, China works with us to prevent a conflict. Far from subverting its neighbors, China seeks investment from their business leaders. Rather than oppose our foreign policy goals, it acceded to the Non-Proliferation Treaty, supports a nuclear test ban, takes part in the ASEAN Regional Forum and cooperates at the UN Security Council.

AND IN THE FUTURE

What then will we see in the future? We can only guess about China's internal politics -- while the country could certainly become more liberal, it may also regress. But we can expect China's economy to continue growing, perhaps a bit more slowly. China will continue upgrading its military. In twenty years, it will be a richer country with a stronger army. There is no certainty, but some risk, that China will use this strength to force solutions to its territorial disputes.

But of course, as China's strength grows, so will ours. Our military technology, especially in critical areas like satellites, communications and missile defense, is advancing more rapidly than any other nation's.
China's neighbors will also be stronger. Korea may soon be reunited. India, now growing only a little slower than China, is already a creator rather than a consumer of state-of-the-art information technology. The ASEAN countries -- with their growing political unity, wealthy middle-class societies and half-billion population -- are stronger and more stable each year. Everyone who has underestimated Russia in the past has regretted it later. Most important, rash moves on China's part could lead Japan to rearm.

Taking all this together, my answer to the basic question is clear. Relations with China will be difficult at times. We will sometimes have different perspectives. And on occasion we will have genuinely different interests. But the facts and the record show that China is not a fundamentally hostile power. And if it does become aggressive or hostile, it will encounter stronger resistance in the future than it would today.

THREE STEPS TO PEACE

But our responsibility is to make sure it never comes to that. It is to keep the peace. And there are three steps we must take to keep the peace.

First, watch our own behavior. Be consistent; in the past few years we have tended to lurch from one approach to another, and that hurts us. Avoid reckless actions, like abandoning the one-China policy, which we know will provoke trouble. Equally important, avoid actions like withdrawing our military forces from Asia, which would create an impression of weakness and perhaps tempt people into rash behavior.

Second, deter aggression. Not by embarking on a "containment" policy, as some now suggest -- that would guarantee, not prevent, conflict. Instead, maintain the economic and technological strength that supports our military presence. Preserve our alliances with Japan, Southeast Asia, Korea, Australia and New Zealand, along with our weapons sales to Taiwan. As time passes, strengthen our trade and perhaps security links with Russia, India and Vietnam. If we do these things, no aggressive policy can succeed and China will know it.

THE NEW OPEN DOOR

Three, intensify engagement with China. To open a new century, we can offer a new Open Door. Secretary Hay's version, of course, meant Most Favored Nation status for all those trading with China as well as opposition to colonial expansion. Today we can make MFN status permanent and end the irresponsible annual threat of economic warfare against China; it is absurd for China to be one of just ten or twelve countries without permanent MFN status. Regular summit meetings between Presidents. Trade. Military exchanges. Consultation on regional issues. Membership in international organizations. Tourism. Sports. Academic exchange.
This just amounts to giving China the respect and equality it deserves. And for whatever it's worth, in personal terms I find Chinese political leaders pretty candid and approachable when you treat them with respect. A few years ago I had a chance to talk with President Jiang Zemin for a few hours. He was especially interested in discussing technology and spent a while recounting his training as an electrical engineer. But he was also willing at least to talk about sensitive issues like Tibet and human rights. Didn't solve them, but you have to start somewhere.

TAIWAN, HONG KONG AND HUMAN RIGHTS

And that brings us back to the issues I talked about when I began -- Hong Kong, Taiwan, prisoners of conscience, the WTO, missile sales, the environment. With respect to these issues, engagement is essential, but it is not enough. We need results. And if we avoid threats and bluster, but make sure China knows that force is not an option; if we make our own interests clear; if we seek out mutual interests whenever possible; we can get results.

In areas which involve land or sovereignty, we must be patient. These include three of the most controversial: Taiwan, Hong Kong and human rights.

As we saw last year, the most delicate of these is Taiwan. And our historic policy is sound. We leave a political settlement to Taipei and Beijing. Provide Taiwan defensive weapons. Maintain strong economic ties and support Taiwan's membership in organizations like the WTO which carry no sovereignty implications. And show, as we did in sending carriers to the Taiwan Strait last year, that force is not an option in this dispute.

With respect to Hong Kong, our influence over the transition is limited. And we must be very sensitive, because not only China's government but its people take great pride in Hong Kong's return to Chinese sovereignty. And we must recognize that our direct interests in the transition -- continued Navy port visits, fair treatment for our citizens and businesses in Hong Kong -- China is doing a good job.

But we must also make sure China sees the consequences of its decisions in more sensitive areas like civil rights and the Legislative Council. Troubles here will make Congress unlikely to approve permanent MFN status this year. In the long run, and probably more important, if China's pledge of "one country, two systems" proves hollow, and the city's democrats are barred from taking part in government, people on Taiwan will watch and learn lessons about China's offers to them. A different approach can have the opposite effect; for example, a quick transition to a fairly elected Legislative Council will make prospects on these other issues improve.

On human rights, our goals should be clear. We should not attempt to democratize or change China's government. Rather, we should aim for international standards of human rights, whomever runs the government and whatever sort of
government it is. In the short term, releasing prisoners of conscience and granting Red Cross access to jails. Over time, tolerance for peaceful political dissent -- as, in fact, China has become tolerant of peaceful dissent over economic policies -- together with religious freedom and a broad commitment to the rule of law.

We should use cooperative means whenever we can. For example, we can prevent hundreds of deaths every year by training Chinese factory managers in workplace safety and fire prevention. But we should also continue advocacy for political prisoners. Lead at the UN Human Rights Commission. Provide information through the State Department human rights report. And make sure China's leaders know we will not give up until they accept international standards of human rights. As Confucius' disciple Mencius said:

"Benevolence brings honour; cruelty brings disgrace. Those who act with cruelty but dislike disgrace are like those who live in marshes but dislike being wet."

**MUTUAL INTERESTS**

In areas which do not carry implications for land and sovereignty, we should expect results much sooner.

One case is Korea. We serve as the deterrent to war on the peninsula; China is the one power which can make the North Korean leaders understand the realities of the modern world. Only together can we stop nuclear weapons from entering the peninsula; prevent any conflict as North Korea's economy contracts and its leadership changes; and make sure reunification, whether this year or sometime in the next century, is peaceful.

Missile and nuclear weapons proliferation is another example. Here, despite the headlines, China's interest -- if not yet its policy -- is virtually the same as ours. China borders two nuclear weapons states, Russia and Kazakhstan; reportedly, two undeclared nuclear powers, India and Pakistan; and three, perhaps four more -- Japan, Taiwan and the Koreas -- which could quickly become nuclear. China has more to lose by the spread of nuclear bombs and missiles than almost anyone else.

Trade is a third case. Both countries will benefit from a permanent and balanced trade relationship. China should have permanent MFN status. And we should expect, through the WTO negotiations, China to give up its present protectionism.

Fourth, China's environmental crisis. Think about greenhouse emission and global warming. Ocean pollution and loss of fisheries. Rare species and biodiversity. Saving vulnerable regions like the Pearl River Delta. The range of issues is vast and their effect on our future tremendous.
CONCLUSION

It is a packed agenda. We have more challenges than you can count. But if we set the right strategic goals, and take the time to understand China, we have every reason to be optimistic.

At home we have a strong economy, lower deficits, falling crime rates and stunning advances in science and technology.

In Asia we have a record of success; a policy which has kept the peace for twenty years and helped create an economic renaissance.

And with respect to China, we have sound policies that will bring us what we seek.

As we begin a new century, we begin a new era -- just as Secretary of State Hay did when he announced the Open Door. If we are patient; if we are fair; if we are firm; it will be an era of peace. Thank you very much.